

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Royster, John Henry, Farm
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number State Road 1443 ☒ not for publication
city, town Bullock ☒ vicinity
state North Carolina code NC county Granville code 077 zip code 27507

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>9</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>3</u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>13</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Historic and Architectural Resources of
Granville County, North Carolina

Number of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined eligible for the National
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.☐ removed from the National Register.☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic- single dwelling

Agriculture/Subsistence

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: vernacular

Greek Revival

Gothic Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls weatherboard

roof metal

other wood

brick

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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Perched on a short rise overlooking red clay tobacco fields, its outbuildings and farm pond fanned out to its rear, the traditionally formed yet stylishly detailed house of the John Henry Royster Farm has changed little since its construction in the mid-nineteenth century. Two stories tall and one-room deep, the weatherboarded, heavy timber frame dwelling has exterior end chimneys of brick, a one-story ell, a center hallway and a three-bay front facade shaded by a one-story porch. Its features so common, it could have served as the model for innumerable Granville County farmhouses raised in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Inside, the dwelling's intact woodwork is original, retaining almost all of its carefully executed wood-graining. The only notable interior alteration is the recent sheathing of its plaster walls with modern wood-paneling. Indeed, but for the removal of its shutters and the upper deck of its front porch - the rounded columns of which suggest a turn of the century construction date - and the replacement of its wood shingled roof by seamed metal, the house looks identical to its image in a 1913 photograph.

Many of the decorative features of the house are Greek Revival in style, including molded baseboards, two-panel doors at the upstairs rooms and ell, and the five post and lintel mantels. These features, commonly found in surviving mid-nineteenth century Granville County dwellings, are joined by more exotic, Gothic Revival style decorative devices related to the work of noted regional architect Jacob Holt. Narrow rounded arches set in the posts of some of the mantels, and inset pointed-arch motifs found at the window aprons of the west downstairs parlor, are similar to the work of Holt and the designs of William Ranlett, whose The Architect of 1849 had a marked impact in the 1850s on Holt.¹ Fluted corner pilasters are also reminiscent of Holt's work, as are the pointed and round-arched, inset panels of the downstairs front block doors. The house's most prominent decorative feature, and that most closely related to Holt's work, is the front entry, which is adorned with pointed and round-arched lights and inset panels, and tiny pendants.² Doors, baseboards and stairs throughout the interior are handsomely wood-grained. The craftsmanship in the hallway is among the finest in the county, featuring a host of different graining patterns set in trompe l'oeil panels on the stair risers and baseboards.

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The farm's 12 late nineteenth and early twentieth century outbuildings include an unusually full selection of those most often found on old tobacco belt, bright leaf era farms. All but a charred tobacco barn contribute to its integrity. The domestic outbuildings close to the house ["A" on sketch map] are all built of frame. To its northwest stand an early twentieth century garage [B], corn crib [D] and shed [E] and a late nineteenth/early twentieth century dairy [C]. Few dairies survive in the county that retain their insulation, in this instance sawdust packed between the interior and exterior walls. To the house's northeast are a late nineteenth/early twentieth century smokehouse [H] and an early twentieth century chicken house [F] and brooder house [G]. Further to the northeast, near the edge of the farm pond, are the outbuildings central to the farm's existence, those devoted to curing tobacco. Built in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, they are a square-notched log strip-house [J], two-square-notched log tobacco barns [I and M] - one of which [M] went up like a flare with a full load of cured tobacco during the 1987 harvest - a metal-sheathed log tobacco barn [L] and a two-story tall, frame packhouse [K].

¹Catherine W. Bishir, "Jacob W. Holt: An American Builder," in Common Places, Readings in American Vernacular Architecture (Athens, Georgia, 1986), pp. 447-481. See in particular pages 458 through 461, which include plates from Ranlett's The Architect. Ranlett's mantel design at the bottom left of page 459 features inset rounded arches, as well as a Gothic motif at the lintel similar to that of the west parlor's window aprons. This latter motif is also found at the backs of the pews of Salem Methodist Church in Granville County, another local building designed or influenced by Holt.

²Bishir, "Jacob W. Holt: An American Builder." See in particular photograph at page 460 of entry of Vine Hill - built in 1856 in Franklin County, North Carolina, by Holt - which has a transom, sidelights and doors almost identical in articulation to those of Royster's house.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Agriculture

Period of Significance

Mid-nineteenth century
- 1937

Significant Dates

Late 1850s/
1860s

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Holt, Jacob, School of or designed
by

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

☒ See continuation sheet

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The John Henry Royster Farm is significant historically as an intact representative of the rural life in Granville County of modest mid-nineteenth century planters and subsequent late nineteenth and early twentieth century bright leaf tobacco growers. (See Historic Contexts 1 - The Plantation Era in Granville County, 1746-1865 - and 2 - Bright Leaf Tobacco and Rural Granville County, 1866-1937) Its well-maintained and little altered farmhouse is architecturally significant for its early, traditional, center-hall plan I-house form and its fine mid-century finish, which includes artful and intact wood-graining, Greek Revival adornment and rare Gothic Revival style elements reminiscent of the work of noted regional builder Jacob Holt. (See associated Property Type 2 - Greek Revival and Romantic Style Dwellings) The farm's evocation of bright leaf era rural life is bolstered by its 12 outbuildings, all of which contribute to its integrity, but for a tobacco barn which was scorched beyond repair in a fire during the 1987 harvest. These outbuildings include a range of tobacco buildings down a lane near the farm pond and other more domestic buildings to the house's rear, among which is a rare surviving late nineteenth or early twentieth century dairy that still retains some of its insulating infill of sawdust. (See associated Property Type 6 - Outbuildings) Although operated as a traditional bright leaf tobacco farm within the past 50 years - and still farmed by modern means - the significance of the farm is not extended past 1937 because it has not achieved exceptional importance within that period of time.

According to descendants, the house was built for John Henry Royster (1828-1898) and his wife, Esther (Stovall) Royster (1840-1879), in the mid-nineteenth century. No deed survives which records their acquisition of the property, however. At the taking of the 1850 federal census, Royster was living with his father, Bannister (or Banister) Royster, in the Abram's Plains District, the former name of the district in which the house stands. By the taking of the 1860 census he had moved from his father's house - though he still lived within the district - married and acquired two slaves, a male aged 22 and a female aged 13. As his father was a very successful planter who owned 46 slaves in 1860, and his own estate was valued at \$7,585, he may well have had the means to build the house shortly before the Civil War. Whether or not he built his house before the 1865 closing date of the plantation era, or during the dawning years of the bright leaf era, his dwelling's heavy timber frame

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construction and Greek Revival finish connect it with the architecture of the 1840s and 1850s in the county.

Royster's family wealth - if wealth gives one a greater opportunity to be exposed to new ideas - may have led him to adorn his traditional center-hall plan I-house with the stylish if subdued Gothic Revival elements favored by Jacob Holt and his imitators. Elements common to the Holt school include the fluted exterior corner pilasters; pointed-arch adorned window aprons in the west downstairs parlor; inset rounded and pointed-arch door panels; and, most notably and noticeable, the form and finish of the front entry. The entry's inset arched panels, tiny pendants and rounded side and transom lights are typical Holt features. An almost identically articulated entry, for example, is that of Vine Hill, built by Holt in 1856 in Franklin County, North Carolina.² Whether Holt built the house, and whether or not it was raised prior to or shortly after the Civil War, is not known, for no record of its construction date survives and his influence was ³pervasive in the region for decades on either side of the War.

Royster left the house to his daughter, Lucy (Royster) Frazier, who in turn sold it, in 1905, to her brother, Thomas Alexander (1870-1925) and his wife, the former Frances Hobgood (1883-1959) [Deed Book 59, Page 233]. The Roysters and three young daughters - Nancy, Ruth and Marie - are pictured in front of the house in a photograph taken circa 1913. Although Frances moved from the house a few years after Thomas' death, the house remained in the family until 1981.

¹ Interview with Mrs. Marie Royster Cutts, granddaughter of John Henry Royster, September 16, 1987.

² Catherine W. Bishir, "Jacob W. Holt: An American Builder," in Common Places, Readings in American Vernacular Architecture (Athens, Georgia, 1986), pp. 447-481. See in particular pages 458 through 461, which include plates from William Ranlett's The Architect of 1849 that influenced Holt's work, and a photograph of the entrance to Vine Hill.

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³On a visit to the house in early 1986, Catherine W. Bishir observed that she thought it was of the Holt school, rather than designed by the master himself. She also felt that it was more likely built after the Civil War than before it.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bishir, Catherine W. "Jacob W. Holt: An American Builder." Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986, pp. 447-481.

Granville County Deeds. Granville County Courthouse, Oxford, N.C.

Interviews with Mrs. Marie Royster Cutts, granddaughter of John Henry Royster, March 24, 1986, and September 16, 1987.

Interview, and visit to property, with Catherine W. Bishir, February, 1986.

United States Manuscript Censuses. Microfilm located at Richard H. Thornton Public Library, Oxford, N.C.

☐ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approximately 11 acres

UTM References

A

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

D

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☒ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

☒ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

☒ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marvin A. Brown/Architectural Historian & Patricia Esperon/Historian
organization Granville County-Oxford Historic Survey date 10/21/87
street & number P.O. Box 1556 (State Historic Pres. Office) telephone 919-693-1491
city or town Oxford state N.C. zip code 27565

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	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	17	719240	4043180
B	17	719390	4043140
C	17	719310	4043080
D	17	719370	4042970
E	17	719360	4042930
F	17	719250	4042940
G	17	719250	4042860
H	17	7200 40	40430 00

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at point A: 17 719240 4043180 on the USGS polygon where the tree line turns southeast, continuing in a straight line southeast, along the edge of the woods at the northeast of the farm pond, approximately 800 feet to point B: 17 719390 4043140 on the polygon, where the tree line turns southwest. Continuing in a straight line southwest approximately 500 feet, along the edge of the woods to the southeast of the farm pond, to point C: 17 719310 4043080 on the polygon, where the tree line turns east. Continuing in a straight line east approximately 200 feet, along the edge of the woods, to point D: 17 719370 4042970 on the polygon, where the tree line turns south. Continuing in a straight line south approximately 300 feet, along the edge of the woods, to point E: 17 719360 4042930 on the polygon, where the tree line turns west. Continuing in a straight line west approximately 425 feet, along the edge of the woods, to point F: 17 719250 4042940 on the polygon, where the tree line turns southwest. Continuing in a straight line southwest approximately 375 feet, along the edge of the woods, to point G: 17 719250 4042860 on the polygon, where the tree line meets the northeast side of State Road 1443. Continuing northwest approximately 700 feet, along the northeast side of State Road 1443, to point H: 17

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7200 40 4043000 on the polygon, where the northeast side of State Road 1443 meets the tree line. Continuing in a straight line northeast, along a field line distinguished by a row of trees, approximately 1000 feet, to the northern edge of the farm clearing, at the point of origin.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Approximately 11 acres that include the dwelling, outbuildings, farm pond, and field that have been historically associated with the property, maintain historic integrity, and convey the property's historic setting are being nominated for the National Register of Historic Places. The remaining property has been excluded because it is not known with certainty to be historically associated with the property or because it is now woodland and is no longer used for farm production.

The northern boundary from UTM points A to B includes the pond to its south and excludes woodland to its north. The eastern boundary from UTM points B to C, C to D, D to E, E to F and F to G includes the dwelling and outbuildings to its west and excludes woodland to its east. The southern boundary from UTM points G to H includes the dwelling to its north and excludes property not owned by the owner to its south. The western boundary from UTM points H to A includes the dwelling to its east and excludes property not known with certainty to be historically associated with the house.

Underlined capital letters represent the UTM references for the vertices of the polygon drawn to encompass the property on the accompanying USGS map.

JOHN HENRY ROYSTER FARM Granville County, N.C.

APPROXIMATE SCALE 1" = 200'

APPROXIMATELY 11 acres

Contributing Buildings:

- A- heavy timber frame house, mid 19th cent.
- B- frame garage, late 19th/early 20th cent.
- C- frame dairy, late 19th/early 20th cent.
- E- frame shed, early 20th cent.
- H- frame smokehouse, late 19th/early 20th cent.
- I- square notched log tobacco barn, late 19th/early 20th cent.
- J- square notched log strip house, late 19th/early 20th cent.
- K- frame packhouse, late 19th/early 20th cent.
- L- notched sided log tobacco barn, late 19th/early 20th cent.

Contributing Structures:

- D- frame cinder block, early 20th cent.
- F- frame chickenhouse, early 20th cent.
- G- frame brooder house, early 20th cent.

Non-Contributing Building

- M- burned log tobacco barn, late 19th/early 20th cent.
- Contributing Site:
cultivated field



